

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Submitted by: Dennis Cocking
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Finding:

Much of the Tahoe Basin public and private water distribution infrastructure is inadequate to provide the fire flows necessary to meet current fire codes and fire agency needs.

Background and Supporting Evidence:

The vast majority of water distribution infrastructure within the Lake Tahoe Basin was intended to provide only domestic potable water, and was never designed to provide fire flows necessary to meet current fire codes. For the most part, these public water systems represent an amalgam of previously small independently-owned water systems that have been interconnected into an aging and very complicated water distribution network. Since acquisition of these systems, and especially since the early 1990's, public agencies have made a significant investment in water infrastructure improvements in an attempt to close the gap between existing capability and that desired by fire agencies. Even with these significant improvements, the overall challenge is in excess of \$100 million and, at current funding levels, will likely take 20 years or more to complete. Additionally, there are a significant number of small private water companies with similar infrastructure and funding challenges. Collectively, these constraints substantially limit the fire agencies ability to prevent structure fires from extending into the wild land urban interface (WUI) as evidenced by the Washoe Fire. It also hinders the suppression of large scale wild land fires in the WUI as seen in the Angora Fire.

Recommendation(s):

In order to accelerate the process by which public water agencies can replace undersized water distribution infrastructure to better meet current fire codes, significant state and federal funding (grants, earmarks, loans, etc.) sources must be made available. Fire commission support would be critical to process.

Impacts of Implementation:

Cost: Total cost likely in excess of \$100 million

Funding source: Federal funding, loans, grants, rate increases, etc.

Staffing: No anticipated impact

Existing regs or laws: Should not be in conflict with existing regulations or laws

PROPOSED